The Early East Asian Press in the Eyes of the West
Some bibliographical notes

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Meeting: 79 Newspapers
Simultaneous Interpretation: No

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Abstract
The East Asian press was studied relatively late in the West. One of the reasons is that newspapers did not exist in China, Japan, and Korea until these countries opened to Western influences. There were certainly forerunners of newsprint also in the indigenous tradition, like the famous Peking Gazette (Jingpao) which is often claimed to be oldest newspaper of the world. We find numerous little articles in Western papers on the Jingbao, usually from secondary or tertiary sources; they do not take into account that this gazette had limited circulation and that it just contained edicts and decrees – thus it does not fit the modern definition of newspaper. But it definitely was a forerunner of newsprint.

In China a number of missionary periodicals are counted among the forerunners of newspapers but even such non-religious items like Karl Friedrich Gützlaff’s Dongxiyangkao meiyuetongjizhuan - they were usually monthlies, or irregularly published serials. Some Western language items do qualify as newspapers, like A Abelha da China (1822-1824), Macao’s first (Portuguese language) newspaper, but Chinese press history really starts only with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Chinese papers.

Shenbao, founded by the British businessman Frederick Major in 1872, became very successful and was probably the best known paper before 1949. The history of Chinese newspapers and their forerunners is sketched very well by Roswell S. Britton in his pioneer work: The Chinese periodical press 1800-1912. In a number of chapters: Indigenous newspapers and gazettes, Introduction of Western journalism, Chinese reactions to the alien press, Wang T'ao and the Hongkong newspapers, Alien periodicals in the treaty ports, The Shun Pao and other Shanghai papers, General newspaper developments, Liang Ch’i-ch’ao, the reform press, Authority and the new press, the revolutionary press, The new and the old, especially the prehistory of Chinese newspapers is well shown. Also the rapid and successful launching of Chinese language papers is thoroughly documented. A bibliography of no less than 140 titles, 24 illustrations as well as the use of Chinese characters throughout the book make it attractive Britton lists an earlier, careful study by A. S. Polevoj1, but apparently did not use it to its full potential: Periodičeskaja pecjet' v Kitae was the first full length book on the Chinese press, giving a sketch of its historical development and focusing on a characteristic of the major Chinese papers, giving ample examples from their contents. In an appendix the author provides a listing of 476 papers (with Chinese characters) by place of publication. He also adds an facsimiles of caricatures from Chinese papers - this seems the first attempt to make such drawings available to the Western reader. A later treatment of the subject is by E. Krebs: Die politische Karikatur in China, where 18 samples, with explanations, are given from Peking dailies.

A short introduction to the Chinese press, with listing of titles, was provided by Carl Fink2, formerly editor of Der Ostasiatische Lloyd in Shanghai, in a booklet Die Presse des Fernen Ostens (1926). Particularly valuable is the Ph.D. disstertation by Kim Heun-Chun: Die Aufmachung der modernen Zeitung in Ostasien [The get-up of the modern newspaper in East Asia]. Leipzig 1928. He analyses the distribution and presentation of contents within the papers. While he finds that the foreign forms of mass communication were

1 1886-1971; Polevoj studied at the Oriental Institute in Vladivostok and then lived in China from 1917 to 1939 when he emigrated into the United States.
2 1861-1943. See P. W.: Carl Fink† Ostasiatische Rundschau 1943, 108; Ibid., 18.1937,331-332
quickly and easily adapted by Japanese journalists, owing to their aesthetic sense, he
cconsiders the Koreans fact oriented and mainly interested in the political lead articles
which certainly influenced the form of presentation. In China at that time he noticed
to many divergents developments and considered the Chinese press still in a process
of formation.
Thomas Ming-heng Chao analyzed The foreign press in China in a preliminary paper
for a conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations in 1931. He presents many
details on the editorial policy, contents, and staff from the point of view of a
contemporary. A nice feature is the addition of caricatures of some of the elading
journalists.
Rudolf Löwenthal³, 1909-1996, studied Zeitungswissenschaft («newspaper science»)
in Berlin before he went to China as an emigré. In a series of articles and one book
he studied especially the newspapers in languages other than Chinese, like the
Russian and German as well as the religious press in China. He also dealt with the
paper supply for Chinese newspaper publishing,⁴ and with the bibliography of
Chinese press history. The religious press comprises mainly periodicals as the author
also indicates in the title of his book, a pioneering work that for the first time
assembled a wealth of information on the Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Taoist,
Confucian, Islamic, Jewish and Russian Orthodox periodical publications in China.
Löwenthal extended his studies even to other countries, e.g. the Chinese press in
Australia. Löwenthal's methodical approach shows him as a trained newspaper
researcher. He is factual, data oriented and refrains from lofty interpretations.
In 1942 a Ph.D. thesis on the paper production and trade in China, Japan and
Manchukuo was defended by Ingeborg Rühl.⁵ This is an economic study, taking into
account the war situation, but not going into any detail regarding the newspaper
industry.
Wolfgang Mohr⁶, 1903-1979, was a real newspaper professional not a journalist but
an engineer who specialized in printing technology; he knew Chinese and spent the
years 1932-1956 in China. His three volume work on the development of the
Chinese press is more of a documentation than a press history. The centre piece of
the work is a collection of facsimiles from Chinese papers, arranged in systematic
order. It starts with a description of the early press, until 1911, the end of the Chinese
dempire, and deals with the government and the private press separately. The
followinbg mainsction deals with the newspapers under the Peking government
(1912-1927, and the Nanking government, 1928-1949, with detailed treatement of
the press during the war, and the continues to show the development in the People’s
Republic of China until 1954. Newspapers in Taiwan, the People’s Republic and
Chinese language papers around the globe are relatively short. The conclusion
comprises presentations of special groups of papers, like the party press, and
individual papers. All these documents are commented upon in volume 1 which also

³ H. Walraves: Schriftenverzeichnis von Rudolf Löwenthal (Loewenthal),
Monumenta Serica 45.1997,417-437; Michael Pollak: Rudolf Loewenthal
⁴ Printing paper: its supply and demand in China. Yenching Journal of Social
Studies 1.1938,108-121.
⁵ Ingeborg Rühl: Die Papierwirtschaft in China, Japan und Mandschukuo.
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⁶ See Herbert Franke: Wolfgang Mohr† 1903-1979. Orients extremus
27.1980,151-154; Wolfgang Bauer: Wolfgang Mohr† Nachrichten der
features chronological listings, including Chinese characters, as well as a bibliography. Vol. 2 provides numerous lists, statistics and map illustrating the development of the Chinese press. All in all, this is more of a catalogue than a press history but the careful documentation and its down to earth approach make it an extremely valuable reference tool which may serve as the basis of further analytical research.

The Shanghai Pictorial *Dianshizhai huabao* found special interest in Germany. It was first made known by Max von Brandt who had been the German minister to both Tókyo and Peking until he had retired after 33 years of service and devoted himself to writing. He considered the Pictorial a mirror of Chinese life and published 82 of its illustrations / episodes with commentary while the translations were prepared by Wang Yintai who at that point in time studied in Berlin but was to become a well-known politician in China later on. The author commented: «The last decades have produced already a large, perhaps too large number of books on China and the Chinese, but we always received a picture seen by foreign eyes, described by a foreign pen, lacking the originally which alone would be able to catch the sympathetic interest of the general reader – in spite of the care of the authors to observe this world strange to them and us, and despite the detail in which the described it.» The author divided his selection in ten sections according to subjects like Imperial Court, Family Life, Death and Burial, Pastimes, Law Enforcement, etc. and provided ample commentaries on the respective scenes, drawing heavily on his own experience from his China years.

Bodo Wiethoff focused on the description of Europe and the Europeans in the Shanghai Pictorial, while Fritz van Briessen who stayed as a journalist in China in the early 1940s selected another 52 scenes from the paper on different subjects, like Examinations, The war in Vietnam, the Strange Customs of the Western Barbarians, etc. Again translations and comments accompany the pictures, this time in order to look at the situation in China from a distance and analyse its perception of current events, and foreign impact.

A lot of the material in the Shanghai Pictorial was taken from foreign sources, and this fact was documented in a paper by Julia Henningsmeier. A thorough introduction to the subject for English speakers was only given recently in an Ann Arbor dissertation by Ye Xiaoqing.

The *Dianshizhai huabao* was published from 1884 to 1898 in Shanghai by the well-known daily Shenbao which was founded by the British businessman Frederick Major, and became popular. This partly due to the publisher's business acumen but to a large degree by the well executed large illustrations which contain descriptive text in the same way as traditional Chinese paintings. The illustrations were printed lithographically; they were executed by different artists the best known of which is Wu Yuru who also published a pictorial newspaper by himself.

### Korea

Korea’s press has been little studied as a separate subject. Because of the political development it was sometimes covered by investigations into Japanese newspaper history. We may point out here Altman’s study on Korea’s first newspaper which was published in Pusan as of Dec. 1881: *The Japanese Chôsen shimpô.*
Japan
Pioneer in the field of Japanese press history was Martin Ramming⁷ who investigated Japanese newspapers during his stay in Japan in 1911 and 1912, following his term of study at St. Petersbourg University. He published the results of his trip as Oečerk sovremenago polozhenija periodicheskoi pečati v Japonii in 1913. He gave a the history of the Japanese press, characterized the main papers, described the juridical situation of the press, informed about the news agencies, outlined the contents of the papers and the role of advertisements and dwelled on Japanese journalism.

Ramming returned to the subject in 1934 when he was director of the Japan Institute in Berlin: Die japanische Zeitung in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. This in an update of the previous paper, with the added advantage that Kanji (Japanese characters) are given throughout. There is also a listing of the more important Japanese newspapers.

Also Ramming’s renowned Japan-Handbuch⁸ has an article on the Japanese press (p. 664-666), not, however, from Ramming’s pen but by Werner Wosseng. Like the whole Handbuch, also this article is completely free from ideology and gives a sober and factual account of the genesis of newspapers in Japan and their situation in 1940. It is hardly surprising that another contribution was published in Germany before the end of WW II, considering the the political connections between Japan and Germany during those years. Hayasaka Jiro’s Outline of the Japanese press was offered in German translation as Das Werden der japanischen Zeitungen, with notes and additions by the translator. It is only for the latter that this title is mentioned here - as an originally Japanese publication it is out of the focus of the present survey.

Albert A. Altman, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, researched the early history of modern newspapers in Japan in several articles:

In The press and social cohesion during a period of change: the case of early Meiji Japan he gave a survey of the development of Japanese papers during the first years of the Meiji reform, while in Shinbunshi: The early Meiji adoption of the Western-style newspaper he investigated the adaptation of the Western newspaper by the Japanese in the historical and political context. He started with the first (English language) paper Nagasaki Shipping List and Advertiser (1861) to the shinbunshi («news booklets»), a forerunner of newspapers, and to well-developed dailies as a tool to influence the masses, as for example in 1905 when a protest against negotiations with Russia was organised. Fukuzawa Yukichi had described the role of European newspapers in his Seiyō jijō (The situation in the West, 1866); in 1868 no less than 17 shinbunshi were published. The government was quick in recognizing the potential of the new media and using it for its own goals as described with regard to the Shinbun zasshi (1871). The crisis of 1873 and the citizen rights movement (jiyū minken), however, supported a critical and polemical press, unhampered by government influence.

In a further paper, Proprietor versus editor: The case of the Osaka Asahi shinbun in the late nineteenth century Altman focused on the early history of the Asahi shinbun which was founded in 1879. He described the tendency of the proprietors of newspapers to exert a major influence on the papers’ lines.

Western literature on the East Asian press has been numerous but most contributions if we compare e.g. the listing of the German Language material by Gert Hagelweide⁹, consists of journalistic treatment of the subject on two or three pages but lacks depth. Only very recently there has been a revived interest in press history in Europe as documented by Rudolf Wagner’s essay on early Chinese newspapers and the public sphere, Natascha Vittinghoff’s thesis on Chinese journalism¹⁰, and Barbara Mittler’s book on the Shen-pao.

The selected references surveyed here show a high level of expertise and gave readers a reliable picture of the newspapers in the respective countries.

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